The Build-a-Dinner Formula

Protein + Starch + Vegetable + Sauce = Dinner

Pick one from each column. Any combination works. Tape this to the fridge.

THE MATRIX

PROTEIN	STARCH	VEGETABLE	SAUCE
Eggs	Rice	Frozen vegetables	Lemon yogurt
Rotisserie chicken	Pasta	Bagged salad or slaw	Soy, sesame, garlic
Chickpeas or beans	Tortillas	Broccoli	Tahini and lemon
Ground meat	Potatoes	Zucchini or cabbage	Pesto
Frozen shrimp or tuna	Bread or couscous	Tomatoes or cucumber	Salsa and butter

HOW TO COOK EACH COMPONENT

PROTEIN	STARCH	VEGETABLE
Eggs: 4 to 6 min in a skillet	Rice: 1 cup to 2 cups water, 15 min	Frozen vegetables: microwave 4 min
Chicken: warm 3 min or use cold	Pasta: boil until just tender	Slaw: toss with sauce, serve cold
Beans: roast at 425 F for 20 min	Tortillas: warm 30 sec per side	Broccoli: roast 20 min or steam 5
Ground meat: brown 6 to 8 min	Potatoes: roast at 425 F for 25 min	Zucchini or cabbage: saute 6 to 8 min
Shrimp: sear 2 min per side	Couscous: boiling water, 5 min	Tomatoes or cucumber: slice raw

THE FIVE SAUCES

Lemon Yogurt
Half cup Greek yogurt, juice of half a lemon, 1 grated garlic clove, salt, splash of olive oil.

Tahini and Lemon
2 tbsp tahini, juice of half a lemon, 1 grated garlic clove, salt, cold water to loosen.

Salsa and Butter
2 tbsp salsa warmed in a skillet with 1 tsp butter until it coats a spoon.

Soy, Sesame, Garlic
2 tbsp soy sauce, 1 tsp sesame oil, 1 minced garlic clove, pinch of sugar.

Pesto
Store bought or homemade, thinned with pasta water or olive oil.

FASTEST NIGHTS (UNDER 15 MINUTES)

Tuna and couscous. Couscous plus boiling water, canned tuna, sliced cucumber, lemon yogurt.

Quesadillas. Canned beans and cheese on tortillas, skillet 2 min per side, salsa on the side.

Eggs on toast. Eggs cooked your way, toast, bagged slaw with a spoonful of yogurt sauce.

Pesto pasta and peas. Pasta plus frozen peas in the last 2 min, drained and tossed with pesto.

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Any combination of the four columns makes a complete dinner. Swapping one item for something similar still works.